

APPROVED: Meeting No. 36-94

ATTEST: *Paula Jewell*

MAYOR AND COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND
Meeting No. 30-94

October 19, 1994

The Mayor and Council of Rockville, Maryland, convened in Worksession in the Council Chamber, Rockville City Hall, 111 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland, on October 19, 1994, at 7:42 p.m.

PRESENT

Mayor Pro Tem Weisbroth

Councilmember Robert E. Dorsey
(arrived 8:20 p.m.)

Councilmember Rose G. Krasnow

Councilmember James T. Marrinan

ABSENT

Mayor James F. Coyle (Absent on travel)

In attendance: City Manager Bruce Romer, City Clerk Paula Jewell, and Assistant City Manager Rick Kuckkahn. Also in attendance were, Director of Community Services, Josephine Roberts, Human Rights Officer Michael Mitchell, and Human Rights Investigator, Teresa James.

Re: Worksession with Human Rights
Commission (HRC)

Chairperson Mayo Robertson gave an overview of HRC and the issues currently before the Commission. He said that with four vacancies, the commission was functioning at less than full strength; however they were focused and determined.

He noted that the Commission was developing a manual for a mediation training program and were also developing a peer mediation program that youth could be involved in.

Mr. Robertson also said that the Commission reflected the rich cultural diversity of the City; although they were only working with a 7-member body. He asked that the Mayor and Council approve the candidates who had applied to HRC so that the Commission could implement the community mediation program.

1. Rockville's Response to Hate/Violence Incidents - Carol Hannaford reported on the plan developed by HRC. The plan would establish a system that reported incidents of hate and violence that arise in the City, immediately to the Mayor and Council and the Commission.

2. Community Mediation Subcommittee - Ms. Hannaford presented an overview of HRC's proposed community mediation program. The Commission is ready to implement the program and asked for the Mayor and Council's support in filling vacancies so that the program could be launched. The Subcommittee put together minimum requirements for a comprehensive mediation training program. A first group of trainees would include the Commissioners, staff, and volunteers who would receive the highest quality training, and in turn, train a core group who would train other mediation volunteers.

2. Martin Luther King Commemoration Program - Claudia Segal, Chair of the Outreach Committee, reported that HRC was awaiting confirmation of a keynote speaker for the 1995 program.

3. Progress on caseload reduction Douglass Jones noted the need to obtain computer hardware and software for the tracking system to be used for the community mediation program in order to speed up case processing. HRC would also like to see one additional work station be established so that the Human Rights Officer will not have to share work space with the clerical support staff. HRC had discussed the possibility of going out to solicit donations for the hardware needed.

Councilmember Krasnow reminded the Commission that the candidates who had made application to serve on HRC were put on temporary hold while the Mayor and Council determined what the proper mission of HRC should be. She said that the Mayor and Council were concerned about the legal side of human rights cases handled by staff and the Commission. She noted the past five fiscal year statistics that reflected a total of 12 Rockville resident complaints filed compared to a total of 92 non-resident complaints. Ms. Krasnow said the costs of providing the program was expensive and was clearly not serving Rockville residents.

Mr. Robertson said that while many complaints did not involve City residents; they did involve the City's corporate residents. He said the process was important for attracting and keeping businesses in the City because corporate residents felt that their problems could be resolved effectively and in a climate that was healthy to the City. Mr. Robertson also noted that HRC was moving away from the area of legal dispute resolutions.

HRC believes that there will still be cases not easily amenable to mediation; particularly in the area of employment disputes.

Mayor Pro Tem Weisbroth suggested that the City get a sense of how the Chamber of Commerce felt about this issue. She said perhaps the City should be in the role of facilitating such a process but not challenging businesses in the legal process.

Councilmember Marrinan asked how the County felt about the human rights cases the City handled. He noted that the City received funding from the County to perform human rights case handling. He suggested that if the same funds could be available to the County, they might be able to provide a better service to the residents. Mr. Robertson said part of the County's problem was their lack of outreach; he said that HRC's aim was to improve outreach, and they feel there will be a significant increase in the number of people who live in the City and who will come to the City for help. Mr. Robertson noted that the community mediation program should reduce the amount of time the police were involved in neighborhood disputes. Mayor Pro Tem Weisbroth asked what the training would cost. Mr. Robertson responded that the initial training would incur the most expense; HRC did not feel that the costs for handling cases would increase because people will opt for community mediation. Mr. Jones added that the Commission saw the training as an investment; after mediators were certified, a pool of trainers would be developed who would go out and train other volunteers to mediate disputes. Mr. Jones also suggested that the training program could even be a revenue producing source, and he said that any increase in staff resources

would decrease resources somewhere else, i.e. in the Police Department. Mr. Jones added that HRC commissioners have spent a lot of their own time at conferences learning about community mediation and developing the manual.

Human Rights Officer Teresa James explained that the State of Maryland did not require certification for mediators; however, she noted that the District of Columbia Office of Human Resources and other non-profit agencies were willing to provide training. In response to a question from Mayor Pro Tem Weisbroth, Ms. James noted that within a 90-day period, the Commission had eleven referrals for community mediation cases without the program in place.

Councilmember Krasnow said she was leery of conflict dispute mediation for any one case exceeding one day. Ms. Hannaford said that the commission shared this concern and also recognized that some cases will not be resolved. She said that HRC recognized that there would have to be some time constraints put on mediating conflicts; however, she said that mediators must be allowed some open-ended process.

Staff was asked to obtain information about the County's human rights caseload and their backlog. Staff was also asked to provide information regarding the costs for training mediators.

Councilmember Marrinan pointed out that with the budget constraints, the issue would be a difficult one for the Mayor and Council; he commented that while the

Mayor and Council liked the idea of community mediation, certain other services would have to be eliminated, especially when those services did not serve Rockville residents.

Mr. Robertson offered the suggestion that the Human Rights Ordinance be amended to provide that only Rockville residents would be served by the program.

The Mayor and Council reached consensus on the following issues and expressed the concerns noted:

- Hate/Violence Policy - This is a well thought out plan; staff should proceed with the policy.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration - Continue the school essay contest for the 1995 program. Continue to encourage participation by local schools.
- Appointments to Commission - Mayor and Council will give this more thought; persons to be appointed need to understand that the focus of the Human Rights Commission could change.
- Ordinance Amendments - Staff was directed to move forward with language changes to make the ordinance gender neutral; however leave as is, the alphabetical order of the discrimination classes. Consensus to not move forward with any of the other suggested amendments.
- Community Mediation - Mayor and Council will make a final decision on this program.

Meeting No. 30-94

7

October 19, 1994

Re: Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council, the Worksession was adjourned at 9:20 p.m., to reconvene in General Session on October 24, 1994 or at the call of the Mayor.